CASCADE COMIX MONTHLY

May 1978

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CASCADE COMIX MONTHLY

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EVERYMAN COMICS #1 is a free tabloid available from Everyman Studios. "Yarrg From The Planet Glopp" by Anderson, Peterson and Romero, and "The Space Patrol" by Kirk Kennedy are featured in this issue. The back page has a listing of other comix available from Everyman. Send 25¢ for postage (first class) to:

EVERYMAN STUDIOS
432 S. Cascade
Colorado Springs, CO 80903

FLASHES!!

Roger Brand, Joel Beck and Kim Deitch are in the process of doing a book. Tentatively titled Bonzai ("we really don't know what to call it yet", says Beck), this one will be published by Kitchen Sink.

Robert Crumb was recently in New York, on his way home from a visit to Germany. A German publisher is said to be coming out with an expensive hardbound collection of the Crumb sketchbooks. Crumb had an advance copy of the book, which will not be translated into German. It will be distributed in the U.S. by Belier Press.

Jay Lynch has done a Nard 'n Pat strip, in collaboration with Gary Whitney, for HIGH TIMES. The same team is doing a weekly strip about pidgeons for a paper called THE CHICAGO READER. Lynch has also done more work for PLAYBOY's next comix section.

John Adams' Pure Art Publications has just released PREMIUM CRACKERS #2. This book has a wide range of art styles and approaches, all by Adams, and all "beyond the brink". The three strips in it show tendencies toward surrealism, pop art, dada, and art nouveau, but Adams' sense of absurdity and firm grasp on design make PREMIUM CRACKERS worth more than one reading. Available from Pure Art at P.O. Box 1527, Boulder, Colo. 80306, for 55¢ post-paid.

POLITICKS, the national newsweekly, had an article in its March 14 issue on the political comix which have been appearing of late. Written by Susan Stern, the article covered quite a lot of recent "cause" comix, such as CORPORATE CRIME, COVER-UP LOW-DOWNS, SUBVERT, and the two latest SLOW DEATH issues. Larry Rippee, who read the manuscript before publication, reports that it was edited in such a way as to make a reference to the 1950s crime comics unintelligible.

Dan O'Neill will cover a sex convention in Atlantic City soon, as a roving cartoon reporter for HUSTLER magazine. The result will be a 5-page strip in an upcoming issue.

George Erling is working on a full color issue of YIKES, his perennial mini-comic. This fourth issue will be a limited edition (500 copies), signed and numbered. Regulars Bob Vojtko, Joel Milke and Greg Spagnola will be on hand, with the bulk of the issue to be Erling material.

Jay Kinney's "Red Guard Romance" from YOUNG LUST #5 has been reprinted in NOT GUILTY #3, a small press magazine which also has stuff by Patti Smith, Tuli Kupferberg, Ed Sanders and Balzac. It's $2.00 from Not Guilty Press, Box 2563, Grand Central Station, N.Y., N.Y. 10017.

Dan O'Neill

Interviewed by Artie Romero

These dialogs were culled from about three hours of discussion with Dan O'Neill, creator of the nationally syndicated ODD BODKINS (1963-70), and co-founder and guiding light of Air Pirates Studios, also defunct. Dan has a studio now with Vincent Bode and a "neo-baroque anechdotalist" named Bill Snyder.

I asked Dan if he liked to collaborate, and we were suddenly under way...

O'NEILL -- It's hard to collaborate. The last time I collaborated...to a certain extent...the last time I did that I got sued. (laughter)
CASCADE -- That's been a while!
O'NEILL -- Yeah, well, it's still going on. It was in appellate court yesterday--after five years they finally heard our oral appeals in appellate court. So if we overturn our summary judgement, then we get a trial.

We had a preliminary hearing with dispositions from people like Kurtzman talking about parody, and what we had done was parody and not piracy. Disney wouldn't allow that in; the judge wound't hear of parody; and so they gave a temporary injunction, and then they turned that into a permanent injunction, they turned that permanent injunction over to the magistrate to assess damages...now much we owe them. And so they cut it down to $218,500 from $800,000.

And so we appealed. We don't know if they're taking it. We won't know for two weeks to eight months whether or not we'll have a trial.

And when we get a trial, then we have to go through the fund-raising horribles of defense funds, 'cause we have to fly out witnesses...various professors of literature that the judge will understand, and famous humorists who understand parody, experts in the field, so they can point out to the judge that Disney's off his ass. When you figure every witness is about two grand, cause if you're gonna take a man off his job you have to pay the salary that he's losin' for that day, you have to pay his way out here and put him up somewhere. Somebody who's making 60, 70 thousand dollars a year, they don't want to sleep on your couch.
CASCADE -- But Disney has the money, they have the power. Don't you ever feel like you're beating your head against a brick wall?

O'NEILL -- No. No.
CASCADE -- I understand the importance of what your side represents but it must be hard when they've got all the lawyers.
O'NEILL -- Oh, I have better lawyers than they do. Yeah. Much better lawyers. My lawyers make $750 an hour also, but they're not charging me for it, 'cause it's a first amendment beef. We've had $7000 worth of xeroxing phone bills and dispositions, and stuff like that, all those costs so far. But that's not bad in seven years.
CASCADE -- Not really.
O'NEILL -- Not compared to Disney, putting a hundred grand a year down trying to get us. And when he loses the trial, he's gotta pay the whole ball of wax, and my lawyers can give him the bill.

Gary Hallgren settled with them--he agreed never to do it again, and they hit him with a judgement of eighty-five, ninety thousand dollars. And if he doesn't talk about the case ever ever again, then they don't collect. But if he ever talks about it, or even mentions what his judgement is, then they bill him. Bobby tried to settle with them, and they didn't want to settle with Bobby. And Ted--they wanted $5000 from everybody at the bottom line of cash.
CASCADE -- Just because they were partners, not because they did anything in particular?
O'NEILL -- Like Bobby?
CASCADE -- Yeah.
O'NEILL -- Oh yeah, he did a lot! We all worked on it; we all did different parts of it.
CASCADE -- You mean the mouse strip?
O'NEILL -- Yeah, plus the whole book, the overall design of it. Everybody contributed what they were best at. Gary was the best caligrapher, so he would do the lettering, and Bobby's pen line at that point was the least shaky. So between Bobby and Gary and I we'd get a good pencil down. All of us had our hands in it to create one drawing.
CASCADE -- Did you jam?
O'NEILL -- That's what the Mouse story was, was a theatre game. We had these theatre games that we invented; I use 'em in my classes all the time still. They're based on improvisational theatre. We'd all sit down and we'd write. I had just gotten off seven years of doing a daily, so I was pretty hot, and I had a lot of experience that they didn't have. And they had some graphics abilities I didn't have or probably never will have to some degree, 'cause everybody's different. -So we just put all our strengths together to create a Disney studio.
CASCADE -- That's really what Ted said. That you guys just got together to do this old stuff. You were gonna emulate the old cartoonists.
O'NEILL -- Well it wasn't emulating, it was better than that, it was, by submitting yourself to the discipline of those early cartoons, what you're doing is learning how to draw really well, 'cause those people were fine artists before they were cartoonists. They were artists who invented cartooning because of the newspapers. But they were all incredible lithographers and painters and stuff like that.

You see a lot of cartoons since about the forties coming on, and these people don't know how to draw. If a guy does the simplest figures you can still tell whether he knows how to draw, or whether he's just doing a style. That's

what beats half of these people--everybody who starts out--what beats 'em is that they don't want to take the time to learn how to draw.

In order to sell comics, whether it's an underground or overground or anything, to get it published, it has to satisfy a certain criteria: the lettering has to be clear enough to read, the drawing, the anatomy has to be enough; I mean, you look at this early stuff, it's still all there. I'm not talking about the writing, so much, because that was dictated by the politics and the racial hatreds of the times.

CASCADE -- Is that an original Herriman up there? (pointing at Krazy Kat page)

O'NEILL -- Yeah.

CASCADE -- That's beautiful.

O'NEILL -- I traded five Odd Bodkins strips for it. All these other cartoonists have their Herriman originals. Schultz has one and Gus Ariola has two. I met those guys somewhere in the sixties, and they had to have 'em. And that's the first I knew that there was such a thing.

I had some comic books for a while. I noticed that every time I got one comic book, like an old Disney or something, then I'd develop a lust for the next one, and the next one, and this incredible lust would rear up. One time I had 'em covering the whole walls in their plastic covers. I did the whole house in 'em, drove everybody crazy.

A lot of collectors I distrust because I don't think that they are collecting 'em because they might have some sort of value as pieces of art--it's all money. They don't care what it is and what the guy who wrote it was trying to say. They appreciate the fact that it's worth $25 this year, and next year it's gonna be worth $45. That's exactly what it is that they were created to combat, underground comics. It's funny how they turned into something for the speculator. It just goes to show you that anything will.

CASCADE -- Well, it's just a matter of supply and demand, really. There are more people who want Air Pirates #1 and 2 than there are copies of Air Pirates...

O'NEILL -- Yeah, the hard one to get is The Tortoise and The Hare--the third one. We put that one out and they busted that one, too, 'cause we reprinted parts of Air Pirates #1 in there.

CASCADE -- Are you going to continue doing Dan O'Neill's Comics and Stories for Bud Plant?

O'NEILL -- I'm three years behind on everything. Everybody's mad at me, and probably Bud Plant, too. I'm contracted to do a book for Random House that was due last March and is only 20% done right now, and I gotta finish that son-of-a-bitch, and I'm trying to put the daily back together.

CASCADE -- Odd Bodkins, itself?

O'NEILL -- Um-hm. Yeah, I don't particularly feel like doing another comic strip. I've done two or three other small strips, but I like that one the most, and it was sort of like cut off as it was beginning, for me, to get real interesting. It was in the paper from September '63 till early '70 and people aren't aware of it before 1967.

When you're doing a daily it's a special kind of a panic. People do weeklies for a long time and think "Well, I can handle a daily." I did a weekly for seven years before I did the daily. For two papers--I did a weekly editorial cartoon for five years and then I did a weekly editorial cartoon and a comic strip for a small paper up in Nevada County.

The first paper I published in was the Berkeley Review, in Berkeley. It was started by an ex-Chronicle reporter, and that was in 1957 when I started doing a weekly deadline, a weekly editorial cartoon for a real newspaper. My pay was I learned how to put out a weekly newspaper; I did everything. I was 15.

That's how you gotta do it, because this business is a continual learning process. You're only as good as your last cartoon. The

only smart thing that Hank Ketcham ever said--his whole strip is garbage, but he did say once that between cartoons, you're unemployed.

CASCADE -- It's too bad that they had to invent deadlines, though.

O'NEILL -- No, thank God. If they didn't invent deadlines we'd feel unemployed all the time. Everybody's afraid of the deadline, including me--I fight with them all the time but I've finally come to the realization after seven years of not doing the daily, after seven years of doing it, and seven years of a weekly before that, that these next seven years I have to do a daily because it's the only thing that keeps your health together--my health started to get bad.

The daily deadline is the secret to long life. Stark terror. You don't have time for the rest of the garbage that wrecks everybody else. It's a special sort of tension and you don't have time for the normal tension. Most people go from job to the bowling alley, and they get worn out with the competition.

To learn to write, it takes a long time and then one day suddenly it happens. A couple of other guys like Ariola, Schultz, it happened to them. I talked to them years ago when I was a friendly, in the days when I was a young, respected overground cartoonist in Newsweek, and I thought I was in three hundred and seventy something papers over that seven year period. I never carried more than 40 at once 'cause I kept getting thrown out.

CASCADE -- In and out of a lot of papers.

O'NEILL -- Yeah, I was thrown out of the best. I was banned in Boston three or four times--just shows you the asshole factor of the country through the sixties.

You watch the overground cartoonists running into...they can't become underground cartoonists, so they become ground level cartoonists. They show you adventure stories with tits. Same old smash 'em in the mouth, but now we show tits, which is pretty brave for that pack of kookoos. They're fine illustrators; there isn't a writer in the bunch. None of them can write their way out of a paper bag. If you're 12 years old, and you're still reading comic books written by those guys, then you're retarded.

CASCADE -- It's all completely formula, as far as the story goes.

O'NEILL -- Yeah, now that's comics, but there are better comics than that, and it's a waste of talent. I don't know--I shouldn't be too hard on 'em because there's some fine illustrators doing it. But overground comics--I don't know what they are. There are people that are extremely fine artists who are working in the regular comic business. Most of them aren't writers, and the writers are much better writers than they're allowed to be, because of the restrictions in the publishing business. Because of the fear of offending someone. And most of these comic book companies, when threatened with a lawsuit, turn and run. And every time they turn and run, it

creates a precedent, and all of them are guilty in one way or another of running from Disney at one time or another. Marvel's being sued by Disney, Mad's being sued by Disney, and once Disney starts it, other ones start it, too. And what it does is, you cannot publish a comic book, with the narrow amount of profit there is, considering the gargantuan amount of work and money that it takes to put one together. You know, from putting together one on your own.

CASCADE -- And another thing is, you can live in New York City, and become a colorist, or a production man for one of these comic book companies, and make $20,000 a year, but in New York City, what is that? You're barely keeping your head above water. A scroungy little apartment costs $400 a month.

O'NEILL -- That's why a lot of underground comix come out of the West, because food's cheaper, and rent's cheaper. That's why cultural centers develop away from the high rent districts.

So I'm not mad at 'em or disappointed in 'em. I don't come down on 'em because they can't do the work. It's just that they're not allowed to do it. I know some of the people personally that I really like--I like Joe Kubert a lot, and I like his work. I like Sgt. Rock stuff. Dismiss the politics of the time, and just look at the work, and what was done within the limitations allowed, and you're getting some good work. Even Disney can be appreciated when you scrape off the veneer of politics. But it'll be about 500 years before I think about liking the son-of-a-bitch. We all like the work.

CASCADE -- It's a certain type of crowd-pleasing art. Its sweetness and light.

O'NEILL -- Originally, tho, it wasn't. That's the thing that's so funny. Originally it was a real spiritual lift from the depression, and that's what everyone liked about it. And that original flash was so good that it sustained them all the way through Disney World, where people still remember Steamboat Willy. It's just the old American way--to get so big that you can't control it any more.

We left Dan's home in the hills of Oakland, California, and headed downtown to the studio. While driving, we talked...

CASCADE -- I'm definitely in a strange town when I come to Oakland.

O'NEILL -- Oakland is that way. I went to high school here, so it's that way. I didn't graduate from Oakland High, because I was expelled. There's no glory in it here.

CASCADE -- So you're a home town boy.

O'NEILL -- Yeah, this is Lake Merrit out here...about a week ago I was driving down by the lake, and I was real pleased to see this big crowd around, and the kids playing, and the cops had all the streets closed off, and it looked like they were having a little street party and the cops were helping. I said, oh, isn't that nice, Oakland is a real good community after all. And I'm not more than two blocks down the street when it's breaking over the news that they've just discovered a woman's foot, and they don't know what kind of woman she was, other than the fact that she had coral toenail polish on. And they don't know where the rest of her is...just the foot that was floating there--been in the water for two weeks...it's a strange town.

CASCADE -- (when shown some mouse cartoons by Dan) You sorta work out your hostilities toward the mouse that way?

O'NEILL -- I don't have any hostilities toward the mouse at all.

CASCADE -- Just toward his oppressors.

O'NEILL -- There are no oppressors, not for me, I'm a cartoon-

cont'd on page 16

Rip Off president Fred Todd in his office (above).

The morning of February 16, 1978 was cool and overcast. The door on the inauspicious building on 17th St. in San Francisco's warehouse district sports the wildly colored words, "Rip Off Press". Inside, more colors greet the visitor--racks of bright underground comix covers. A bespecticled, bearded face peered around the corner, the face of President Fred. "May I help you," he inquired. Thus began my first excursion into the domain of the Freak Brothers, Wonder Warthog, Nerds, and scores of other comix creations.

After a discussion with Fred Todd on publishing, distribution, and how it all began, I was escorted upstairs to Rip Off Studios. I saw drawing boards, walls covered with comix originals, a ping pong table and some U.G. comix luminaries: Gilbert Shelton, Dave Sheridan and Jay Kinney. The photos on these pages are from that visit on February 16 and 17. Thanks to the whole crew at Rip Off for their cooperation.

INSIDE

Rip Off Studios

Gilbert Shelton is here seen hard at work on the cover for RIP OFF COMIX #3 (above and right).

Larry Rippee (below) does "all the stuff nobody else has time for", such as ad layouts and other commercial work for Rip Off.

Letters

Your new magazine looks very nice. It's long overdue. We've needed more underground-oriented fan magazines for years, but with a couple of exceptions like Promethean Enterprises they have not been forthcoming. Just why they haven't is up for speculation, but I'd say it's because of the ambiguous attitude most writers and collectors demonstrate in regard to the vestiges of the sixties underground. Overground fandom is kept alive by continuity and industry-subsidized conventions; the underground has neither. A handful of books a year simply will not satisfy the insatiable hunger of the comic book junkie who needs his fix at least once a month. So underground fandom, though it's certainly alive, is always on shaky ground where major books like ZAP are concerned (#9 has been due for what seems like forever). There are other factors. Crumb's anti-fan, anti-convention, anti-promotion attitude is certainly a major one. Unlike Neal Adams who took his rebellion to the fans at conventions and spoke out against industry censorship and art rip-offs, Crumb has spoken only through his art--now that's not to make him any less an influence, but his absence from conventions has meant the absence of many people who would have been there to see the leader. Same is true of fanzines. A great many of them are prompted by artists like Adams and Frazetta and Brunner, who are always willing to talk to fan writers about their work. Crumb casts his "fanboy" in Mr. Natural 3 as just short of a mongoloid idiot. Well, there are creeps around every public event like a convention and we all have to live with them and tolerate their trip, but Crumb's stereotype has probably-cooled the zeal of many fans who might have started underground zines. As the seventies have progressed, I have seen many more ug artists taking an interest in public life, realizing that it is important that they force themselves to go to some conventions and have their say and make their positions known. Justin Green, for example, who rarely appears in public, sat on a panel at Bay Con in 1977, because he, like Terry Richards and Ted Richards, felt it was time the ug took a public stand. Ug artists who have taken an interest will find they have more status at conventions as they go along, but most are still turned off at getting second-class treatment while they see Marvel and DC artists getting free food and rooms. Well, overground companies promote their artists as stars. Jack Kirby's name sells tickets. When ug artists begin to promote themselves to the point where their names sell tickets, then they will be in a position to negotiate with con organizers for concessions, but ug companies do not promote their artists. A few are known, but most are not. This is changing, but slowly. The Rip Off Press and Fast Draw Studios are getting more into advertising and promotion. Krupp has always published a nice catalog. The point is, any fanzine or general magazine has to have a steady supply of copy and that doesn't happen when artists are unwilling to talk with writers about their work or their politics or whatever. In my decade of interviewing and writing about artists and comics, I have found the majority of artists to be paranoid, defensive, hostile, unsatisfied and frustrated in their lives, prejudiced, bitter, and with little understanding of the function of the writer and his work and what it could do for them. I have been put on, lied to, bad-mouthed, libelled, etc., and many times have stepped back and asked myself what the hell I'm doing writing a promotional piece on X for when he's calling me an asshole behind my back. In

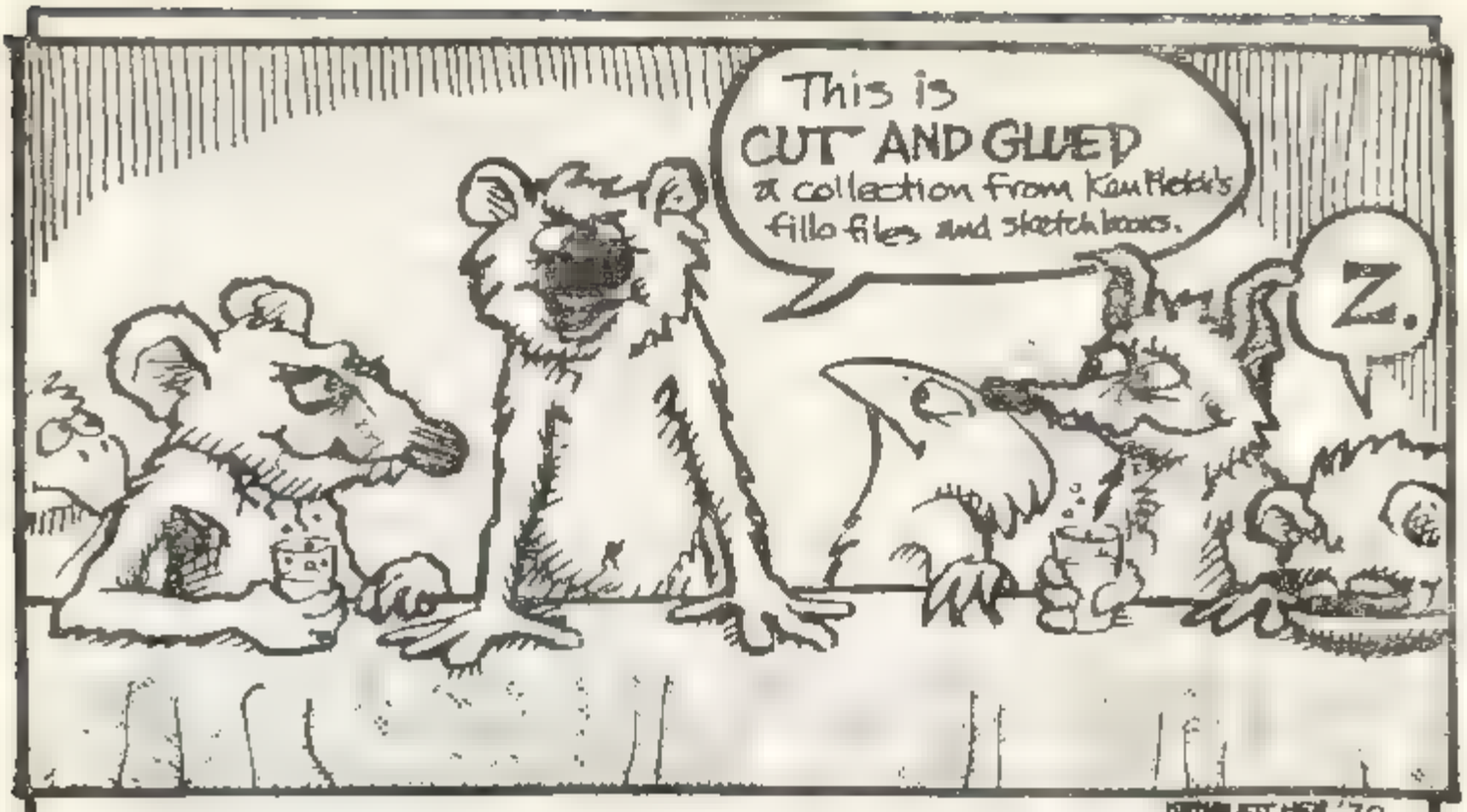
this business, artist A will call you a shithead for lying after he asked you to lie because of some internal industry hassle between him and his publisher, while Artist B will call you a shithead because you told the truth about something he was trying to cover up. I've never met an artist who wanted to hear the truth about his work, including myself. Let me say this about the underground: It's not quite as hypocritical as the overground, but it has a lot of illusions that one attacks only at the expense of long arguments that lead nowhere.

An artist compared your Cascade with Comix World in a letter in your second issue and I found this interesting since I see no comparison at all. Cascade is a magazine. I publish a newsletter. Cascade runs reviews and criticism while I make no pretense of reviewing or criticising anything with any regularity. The function of my newsletter is simply to inform the collectors and young artists on my mailing list what is available, what new markets are opening up, what the trends are in the U.S. and Europe--anything else I paste in each month is just frosting on the cake, pure dada, in other words some eyeball kick to amuse or some book or film I think my people might get into. I have always resisted bureaucracy as a teacher and actor and pro-writer and I will continue to do so. I see Comix World as supportive, not negative, and the majority of the letters in my file agree with my stand, but there are always those who conceive of criticism as necessarily negative and these folks don't get along with me too much. They want me to be more acerbic, more biting, to insult and attack and ridicule artists, to be their Archie Bunker; well, that's not my trip. I receive a lot of art through the mail that is in its formative stages and I always write the artists and tell them to keep on drawing. They know it's amateurish and unpolished. That's not the point. They are isolated folks in the Midwest who need encouragement so they can go on working in the department stores and gas stations. Why would I put them down with "criticism"? As for the people who are already getting published, why say anything much about them? I do when I feel like it, but usually in a letter to the artist rather than in Comix World. No, Cascade has the space and perhaps the desire to be a critical organ. Great, there's room. This July Comix World will be 100 issues old. I wish Cascade as long life.

Clay Geerdes

Bob Vojtko's LOW BUDGET FUNNIES #4 is now available from Bob at 1120 Euclid Ave., Lorain, Ohio 44052, for 25¢. This is a nifty cartoon 8-pager done entirely by Bob.

NEW PALTZ #3 (IRON SOUL STORIES) is the best looking issue so far. It features a Larry Todd cover, and lots of comix inside.



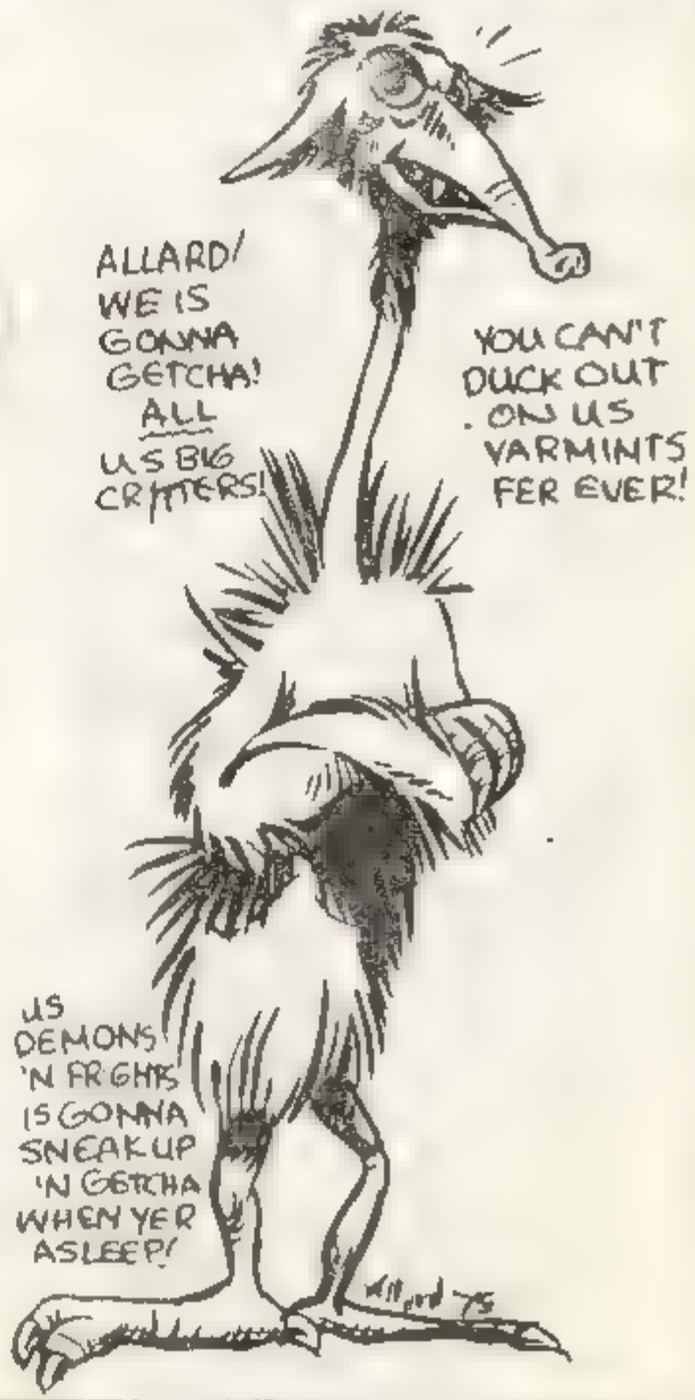
A VIEW OF

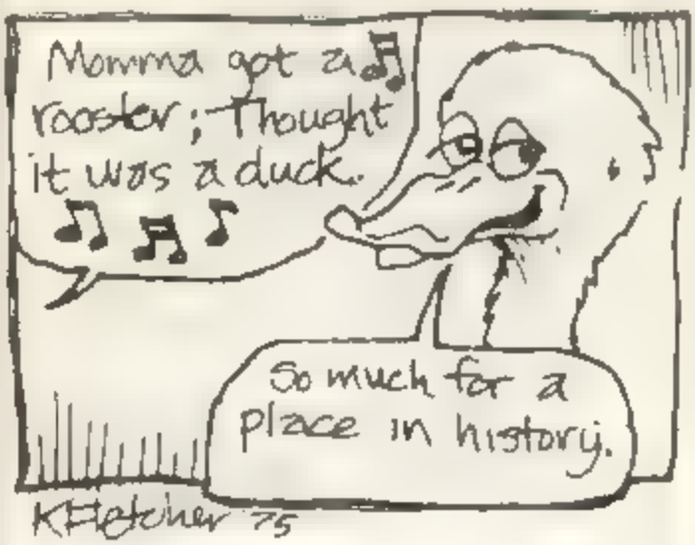
vootie

Being a critter is fun! Critters and varmits, they call us, but we who are members can't get enough of Vootie, the Amateur Publishers Association, or APA, for cartoonists of funny animals (incorporating funny vegetables, minerals and machines).

For those who are unfamiliar with the fannish phenomenon of APAs, we should explain. An APA is a co-operative system for distributing printed material within its membershio. Members print their own contributions, called apazines, and send them to a "central mailer" or "official editor", to be combined into a mailing to all the members.

There are only 45 copies of each Vootie mailing, but those go out to a select list of people in


ALLARD! WE IS GONNA GETCHA! ALL US BIG CRITTERS!
YOU CAN'T DUCK OUT ON US VARMINTS FER EVER!
US DEMONS 'N FRGHTS IS GONNA SNEAK UP 'N GETCHA WHEN YER ASLEEP!
Allard '75



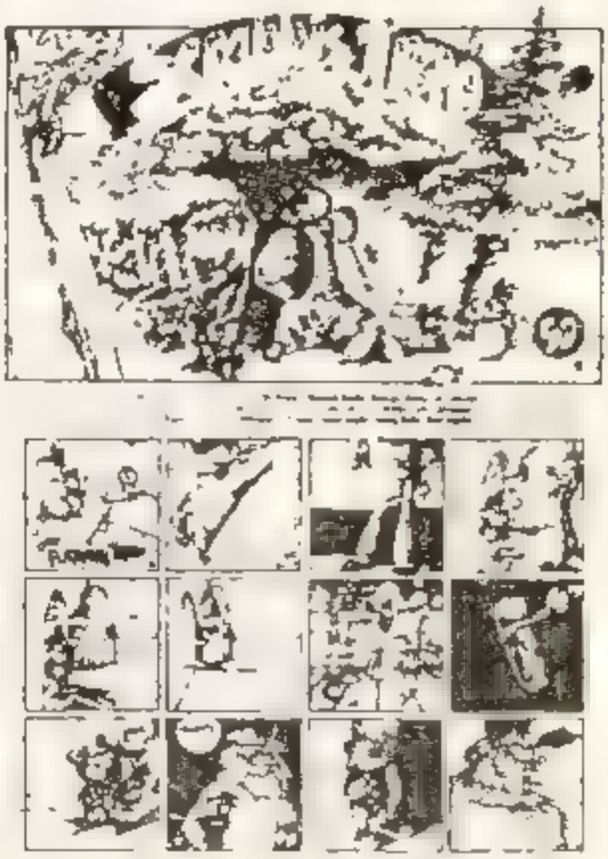
comix. Members include Dan Steffan, Ken Fletcher, Jim Schumeister, Reed Waller, Al Sirois, and Jim Shull. Jay Kinney, Denis Kitchen and George Erling are among the associate (non-contributing) members. Each mailing of "The Voot" contains an incredible variety of comics material. Ray Allard does "Jersey-Talkin' Birds Dat Is Straight Rip-offs of Da Best Comic Strip Ever, POGO"; Ken Fletcher does "Great Scenes from Funny Animal History"; Greg Spagnola offers funny cats and dogs; Larry Becker does funny pumpkins; Schumeister does funny machines, et. al.

Lately Vootie has shown more underground and/or cosmic leanings, with "Cosmixphopters" by Artie Bonm, and 'All-color Litho Toons" by this author, a four page sketchbook portfolio printed in full color. Unlike other APAs, which contain mostly text, Vootie is usually 95% graphics, and good graphics they are.

Those who are interested in becoming critters: to obtain a sample mailing of Vootie, send a spare example of your cartooning "skill", a self-addressed 9" x 12" envelope, and $1.00 to Ken Fletcher, 341 E. 19th St. #2, Minneapolis, Minn. 55404. Only skilled cartoonists may join. Vootie is a creative exchange that is much appreciated by a generation of fan artists who need a fun place to publish.

--Artie Romero

DAN O'NEILL
JOHN ADAMS
LARRY RIPPEE
J. MICHAEL LEONARD
HARVEY KURTZMAN
J. SIERGEY
LARRY TODD
GEORGE ERLING
DARREL ANDERSON
JOHN PETERSON
KIRK KENNEDY
ARTIE ROMERO
BOB VOJTKO
O. BERRY
DAVE TAYLOR
AL GREENIER
BINDU



They're all in SCRABBIS TRENO #1, now available from Everyman Studios for 50¢ plus 25¢ postage.

EVERYMAN STUDIOS
432 S. CASCADE AVE.
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO 80903

EDITOR'S SPACE

Welcome to Cascade #3. This issue is slightly late, but because of the delay I was able to include a letter from Clay Geerdes which I found to be quite interesting.

About eighteen thousand people want to know how I get the color on Cascade's covers, it seems. I do all the platemaking and press work myself on a small A.B. Dick offset press, and the color is done on paper masters, using a light table. All of the color overlay work for this zine is also done by your faithful editor, with the noteworthy exception of this issue's back cover overlays by Darrel. Larry Rippee and George Erling provided color sketches for their covers on our first and second issues, respectively. Those covers were 5-color jobs.

I hope you enjoy this issue. Thanks for your support--it's been very encouraging.

—Artie Romero

* PERSONAL *

To anyone I may have offended in the (April Cascade) unedited, unexpurgated interview; I'm really sorry. Woulda trimmed alla that shit. Dreadfully sorry...

Larry Todd

cont'd from page 8

ist. I'm the guy that's obnoxious. I draw the pictures. They're not my oppressors. I've been picking on Disney ever since I could pick up a pencil, and it's not because I dislike it. Every kid wanted to work for Walt Disney and since he didn't hire us, he pissed us off.

The conversation turned to a strip that Dan was working on at the time for COEVOLUTION QUARTERLY...

CASCADE -- Was this done in a stream of consciousness kind of writing?

O'NEILL -- Stream of consciousness is the third thing to do. The first thing to do is "what are we writing about?", and the next thing to do is build a structure, points that you're going to go through, and all of those points point to an obvious conclusion. And then when you have that bone structure there, then you stream a consciousness across it.

It's like putting peanut butter onto bread, then you've got the sandwich, before that you've got these two things--peanut butter and bread, but you don't really have anything that you're going to eat by itself. There's only a few people in the world so weird that they'll sit down and eat spoonful after spoonful of peanut butter. After the third spoonful it's pretty yucky. Everyone says "Oh I'm gonna be a writer and I'm gonna do lots of stream of consciousness." And what they're saying is the joys of no discipline.

Every idea has a movement, a beat to it. And you have to time 'em. You're going for a reaction from someone. You're going to make them laugh, which makes them less likely to kill you. That's the bottom line of every cartoonist, "I'm only doing this so you won't hit me over the head with a stick, guys."

I don't want people to get the idea that overground comics are a

bad thing and start thinking that it's cool to be underground, because it's not. I was an overground cartoonist before I became an underground cartoonist. You can count the people in the underground comix world who can draw and write on one hand. But it's true that the people who are still being read are the ones who are good at it. It's a good place to get published, that's why it's still important. It's really important for people to get published.

People will work for nothing if they enjoy doing it. We discovered that with the Air Pirates; we had 30¢ a day to live on, and malnutrition and everything set in, but we were so high on what we were doing, that it didn't matter. Disney had that going too. If you give somebody something good to work on where they can put themselves into it, then you've really got something going.

CASCADE -- There's a hell of a lot more cartoonists than we know about.

O'NEILL -- Everyone starts a tabloid, and we had one too, and we got one issue done.

CASCADE -- That's the one that phantom Air Pirate Larry Todd showed up in.

O'NEILL -- Yeah, Larry Todd was in Air Pirates. He was in there from the very beginning. He lived in that studio with us all. Willy Murphy was there...

CASCADE -- He's never really mentioned in relation to Air Pirates so much.

O'NEILL -- Well, he didn't get in on the bust. He came in after that book. He was in with the theatre games and the jams. He was the oldest of the bunch. He was a great man. I remember one night he put a cigarette out on a flat-chested girl's face at a party. My kids saw it--they were so impressed they thought Willy was the greatest person in the world after that, because she was really an asshole, and Willy couldn't take it any more and put a cigarette out on her cheek. They didn't come any better than Willy! I mean, think of it...how many people have wanted to do that? Willy did it. He had a way of doing important things.

It's very hard to be an American and not draw a picture of Mickey Mouse at one time in your life or another...and I didn't at that time use pen and ink--I used a rapidograph pen, felt tip pens, and stuff like that. And to do Disney we had to learn to use croquill pens, and that took months and months of scratching.

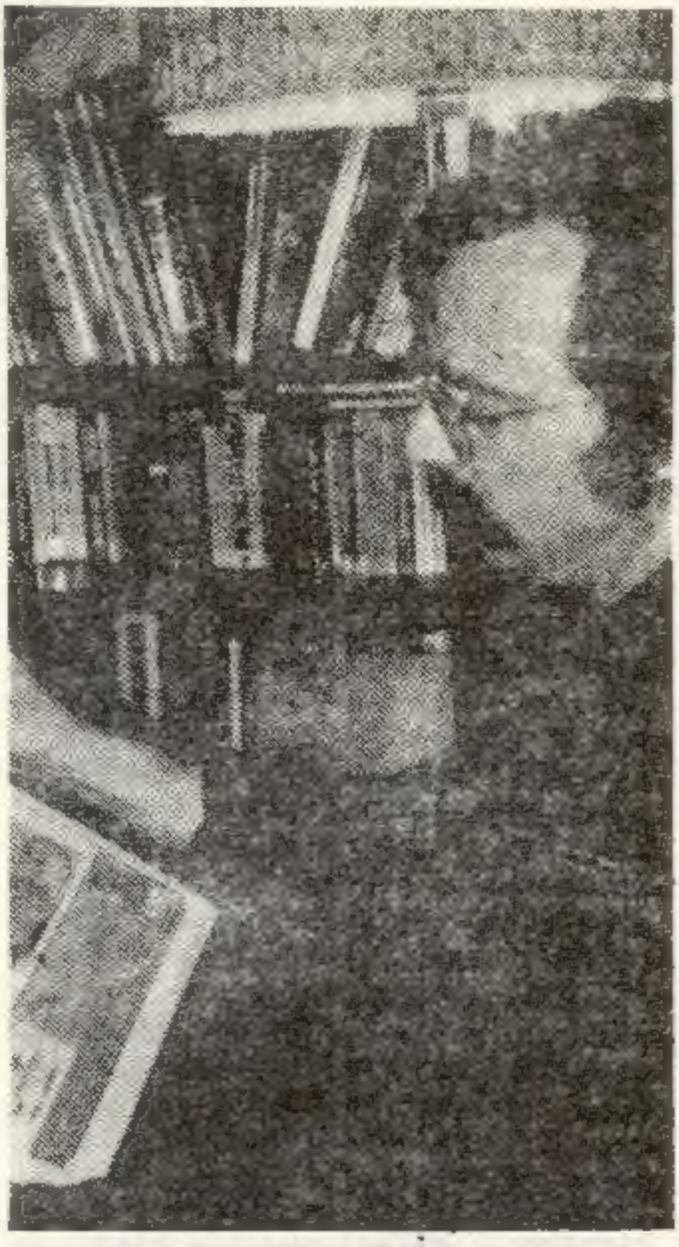
The Air Pirates studio lasted about nine months. It's hard to say, because there's a great memory loss for all of us 'cause Gary had six pounds of hash, and we smoked that all the time. There's five different versions of what happened and everyone is trying to remember; we all remember bits of pieces of it.

It was a great experience for all of us on a real good level. One of the main reasons why I wanted it is because syndicated cartoonists don't meet other syndicated cartoonists, because your syndicates are in competition. Unless you're of equal balance--you both have 150 papers. But I used to be appalled at the other cartoonists who did comic strips, and how much they disliked Schultz, not so much because of what he was doing, but because he had the whole pie they really resented him. But there is a lot of that. That's one of the dangers of the overground commercial market is that it's disrupting to your own personal life. You're so busy trying to learn how to write a comic strip, and there's no school to learn how to write a comic strip, so you have to make 5000 mistakes to learn something. You really would like to talk to another person who does what you do but there's a lot of animosity because of money.

The underground solved all of that because nobody had any money, and they kinda came together. And later on there was a lot of backbiting and they turned into a pretty rowdy crew, but all in all they were a pretty benevolent

bunch of people. S. Clay Wilson is one of the genuinely nice people on the planet. My favorite cartoonist is Kim Deitch. I like to read Kim Deitch's stuff.
CASCADE -- Have you isolated yourself completely from input in the way of dailies?
O'NEILL -- Yeah, oh yeah.
CASCADE -- So you don't read the dailies?
O'NEILL -- No. What is there to read? There isn't anything to read. I'm secure in the history books now. I don't really have to do this again--I've been sitting here winding up a strip, but I don't really have to. And if I do it, and it gets out there, everybody will say, "Gee, he's really lousy." 'Cause when you start that daily grind again, you think it's gonna go forever, and you're real shocked when it stops. I had a nervous collapse when it stopped. 'Cause you've built your whole life around this pattern, you take it away and you just fall down. So the only reason I want to do it again is because it balances me out. And I figure probably 10 or 15 papers will take it. I got my multilith in the basement and I can send it out. I'm going to do it for the sake of doing it, but I don't kid myself thinking that there's 150 papers that can't wait, or that I'm another Doonesbury, 'cause my time was in that period when I had a chance to be really popular. According to popular history, I blew it.
CASCADE -- You never know.
O'NEILL -- Well, yeah, I did. Let's talk middle class living, and I do have a dishwasher, and I have a washing machine that I just got--bought it from Vince. But the power's blown out in my basement so I can't turn it.on. These are the little things that money solves.

All the Air Pirates really was was an idea of mutual survival pact, doing comix somehow. That idea doesn't exist in the overground comics. Most of the people who work for all those outfits, they're really not fond of each



other. But in the underground you didn't have that.

We all kept together even though we can't work with each other anymore. We all came together for that short period to learn something. You learn from another cartoonist but then you have to sit down and learn your own. And there comes a time to quit talking about ideas and start getting them down on paper before you die, which is easy with the amount of bus traffic there is.

We might not be able to work with each other any more because of the past mistakes, but at least we'll never make those mistakes with other people again.

The underground was a funny little kind of a family then, and it kind of fractured and is gone now, but there was about three separate groups. I was the

jive-ass mother fucker from the Chronicle, there was no way to overcome my professional overground reputation with a lot of these guys. It took years to get on a hello basis with some of them because they resented that system that I worked in, thinking that maybe I had the power that the Chronicle had.

When you're working for a syndicate, they have the power. They turn you on or turn you off. It's their machine, you're riding on it. And the underground was trying to create your own machine.

On Collecting Comix

by BRUCE SWEENEY

I recently fell over an underground done in Lawrence, Kansas by Ohle & Sayre called RIVER CITY LIVES!, and if imitation is flattery, S. Clay Wilson would have a big head because these two artists look like they were raised in the same crib as S. Clay. Inevitable, of course, since Crumb has so many imitators, that other u.g. greats would spawn similar artists. They have the same motorcycle-outlaw point of view, by Jack Wilson's capacity to deliver detail. What the hay, everyone has to start somewhere. This came out in 1971 and I've never heard of these artists since. I'd love to see what they're into more recently.

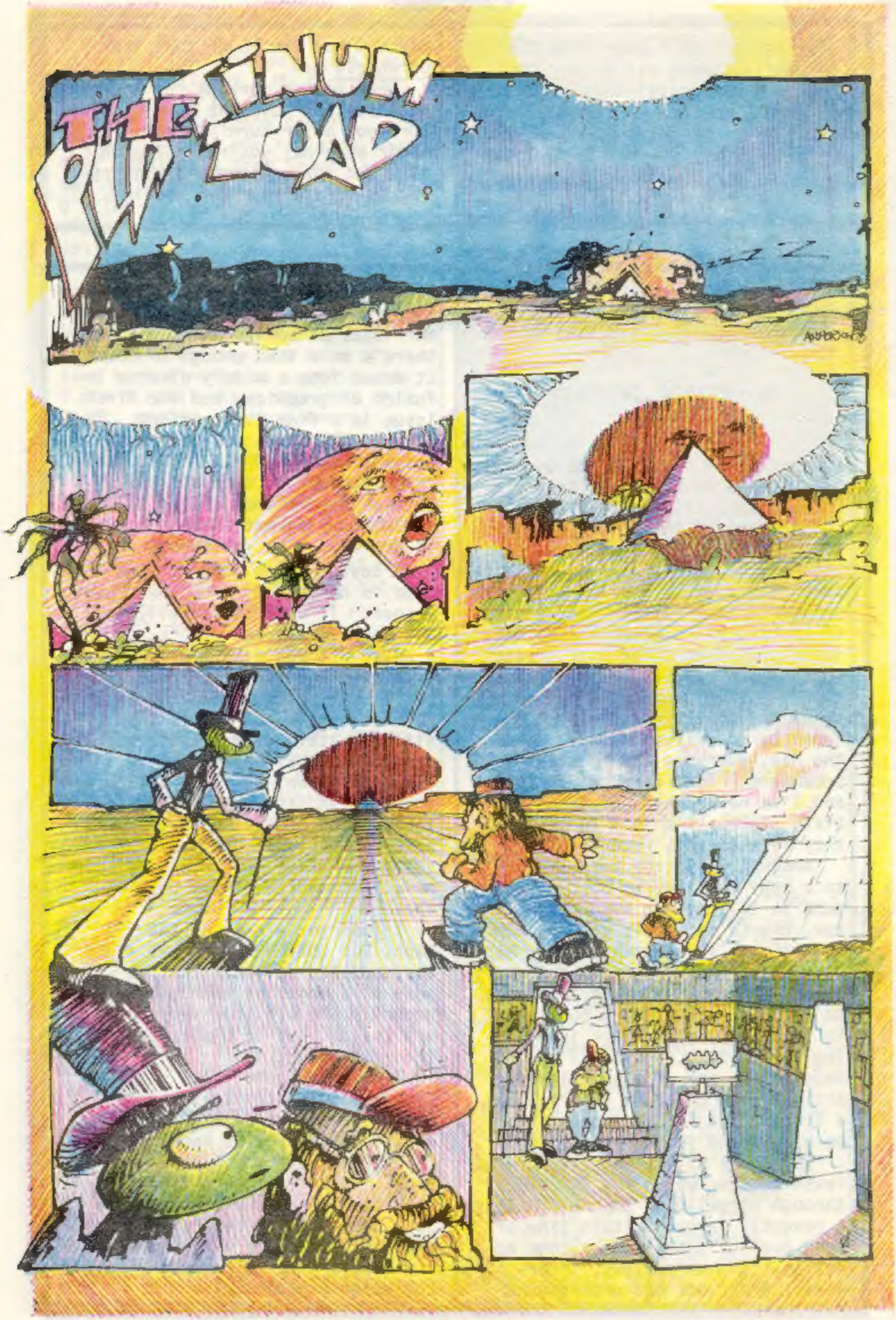
Another collector turned me on to a copy of I AM, an obscure u.g. done in 1972 by Reg King. It's a raw, course art style and the book is not very sophisticated, but Reg King was a contributor to the early YELLOW DOGs. I AM makes reference to the early Print Mint publishers, in fact, and it's always interesting to run into additional comix material by one of theearlier u.g. artists. On the back cover it has a fingerprint in what appears to be blood, and is numbered.

For those of you who like ground level comics, watch for GRAPHIXUS through normal u.g. channels. It's a recently issued British zine of good quality that is a welcome addition. It has reviews, interviews, great ads and underground comix. In my estimation, it's more fun than all the other bogus marriages of comics and comix, and there's more than enough of those. It draws from a widely diverse infusion of graphics, and the first issue is a fine first effort. The editor, Mal Burns, is the person responsible for COMIX INDEX, the first attempt to list all the British u.g.'s from '66 to '77 in a directory format, something we in the U.S. have yet to do.

A Boston-based book of that type is on its way from one Robert Weiner. It will pictorially list all the significant u.g.'s, 16 to a page. It won't be a price guide or list print runs (fortunately!), but it will picture all the important u.g.'s and detail them title by title with a basic stab at judging their availability. For a change, then, we'll be following the British, at least in the establishment of a directory. Weiner's book is due this year, hopefully for $2.95. I intend to have more information on his book up ahead.

I just got a copy of the '73 book, DIE GRETCHEN, and was a bit disappointed to learn that it was more of a dadazine than an underground. There's some very nice art inside, but it's more graphics than cartooning.

Talk about good luck! Collector Jake Schaffner tells me that he pulled copies of DR. STRENGE and EVERWUCHEE (also known as EVERYWHICHWAY) from a rack in a head shop. These are two titles in high demand, and he scooped them just about a week before shipping overseas to Europe with the navy! I'm always glad to hear of another collector's good luck.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